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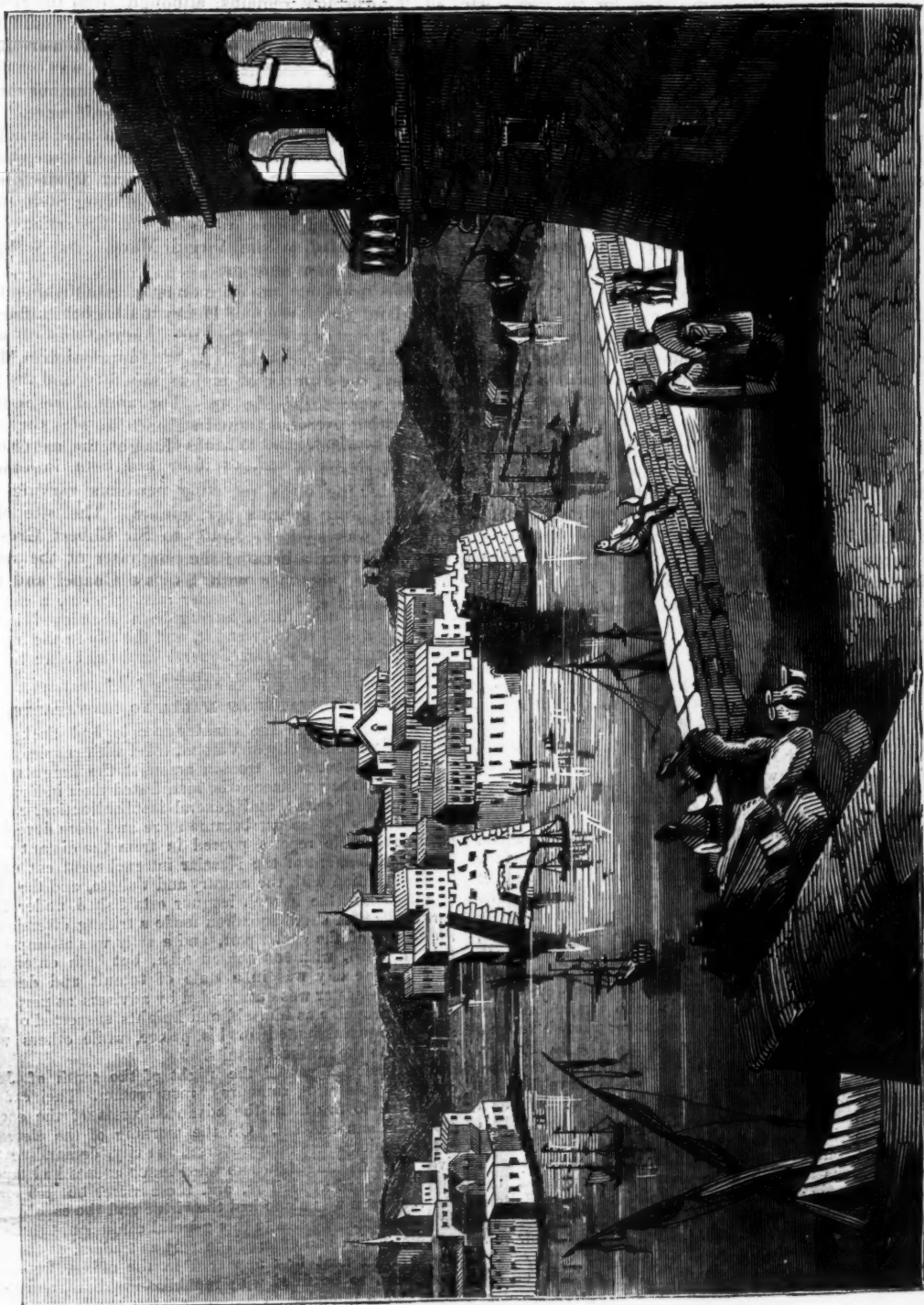
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THE HARBOUR OF MALTA.

SOME ACCOUNT OF MALTA. No. II.

9. ARRIVAL OF NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE AT MALTA.

THE French revolution, subversive as it was of all anterior institutions, was not likely to respect the military friars of Malta; and a loan of five hundred thousand livres which this order transmitted to the unfortunate Louis the XVIth of France, when he was reduced to a state of beggary, afforded the French a pretext for declaring the order of the knights to be extinct within their territories, while its possessions were annexed to the national domains. And although, after this, the grand-master affected to maintain the strictest neutrality in the great European war, yet the English and Spanish fleets were permitted to recruit sailors in Malta, and, as a natural consequence, the French Directory instantly denounced the proceeding as tantamount to a direct act of hostility.

In 1797, Hompesch, the last grand-master of Malta, succeeded as the head of the order. The state of the treasury was now truly pitiable, and it was found necessary to melt and coin the plate of the galleys, and afterwards part of that belonging to the grand-master and the hospitals; so low was the credit of the knights, that no person would advance a single crown. Sedition, too, was busy within their own walls, and a formidable French armament was mustering at Toulon. After keeping the whole of Europe in suspense as to the destination of this fleet, its first division arrived off the port of Malta, June 6th, 1798. It consisted of seventy transports and several frigates, under Commodore Sidoux, who sent a polite message on shore, expressive of the strictest neutrality, and with the request that several small vessels might be admitted into the port, to undergo some trifling repairs, prior to prosecuting their voyage to Egypt, whither, he assured the grand-master, they were ultimately bound. This was of course complied with, and the French made every effort to inspire the Maltese with a false confidence in their amicable intentions. Admiral Bruceys arrived on the 9th of June, in command of the grand division of the expedition, which consisted of eighteen ships of the line, eighteen frigates, and about 400 transports, having 40,000 men on board, and General Buonaparte as their commander-in-chief.

Buonaparte, who was on board the *Orient*, instantly demanded that the whole fleet should be allowed to enter the ports to water, which Hompesch, although a weak man and infirm of purpose, summoned up sufficient resolution to refuse. "The grand-master refuses us water," said Buonaparte, "to-morrow at sunrise the army will disembark upon the coasts of the island wherever a landing can be effected!" and these words were inserted in the order of the day. Hitherto nothing had been done to anticipate a struggle for freedom on the part of the knights, and now only feeble efforts were made for the defence of a place which was impregnable fortified. But there was no union on the part of the Maltese; the people mistrusted and execrated the knights, for the unjust exactions of their past reign. The knights themselves, divided as they were into so many different "languages," of distinct nations and prejudices, could not confide in each other, and of these, the French far outnumbered those of other countries, and fearful lest the pusillanimity of the grand-master, and his well-known attachment to the Czar of Russia, should surrender them and their order to Russian influence, these French knights naturally preferred surrendering themselves to France, their own parent-country, whether a monarchy or a republic. The agents of General Buonaparte could have had no great difficulty in tampering with the knights of their own land; but it was the poor Maltese people themselves who were sacrificed. Thousands of these are said to have run to arms, but the military chiefs would not act with them; seditious reports were propagated amongst the troops and citizens; and though some among the Maltese were deluded by the promises universally lavished by the French, of liberty, equality, &c., yet, by their subsequent conduct, it was fully proved that the bulk of the people were decidedly hostile to the admission of the French. The force on the island was by no means despicable. There were 280 knights capable of active service, 3300 regular troops, and 10,000 Maltese militia might easily have been mustered, but it was too late; the French

knights had already practically delivered up Malta to their countrymen: muskets were delivered to the troops unexamined; the ammunition was damaged and mis-sent; troops were despatched to the coast without provisions; conflicting and impracticable orders were issued, and other similar apparent accidents happened. It is said that the plan of the invasion of the island was projected in Paris, and confided to the principal French knights of the order resident at Malta.

A body of French troops disembarked, on the evening of the 9th of June, in St. George's Bay, which is to the north-eastward of Valetta. The small but important tower of St. George, in the vicinity of the landing-place, was carried without the loss of a single life—one cannon-shot only having been fired by the false knight who commanded it. Throughout the whole of that night the sky was illuminated with the signal-rockets sent up incessantly from the fleet, which extended along the whole north-eastern coast of the islands. At daybreak on the following day another corps landed in St. Paul's Bay unmolested, and a third in the harbour of Marsa Scirocco to the south-east. No attempt at resistance was made, except on the part of the Maltese battalions of Nasciar and two or three other places, and this only to defend their homes from the insolence of Buonaparte's soldiers. These, with their usual licence, instantly began to lay waste the island; and, seeing their hearths violated, the native militia slew several of the offenders. At mid-day every fortified post in the open country, except the tower of Marsa Scirocco, had the French flag floating over it. Eighteen French knights fell, as it were by accident, into the hands of the enemy, and General Buonaparte, exclaimed, as if he had been in earnest, "What! am I constantly to meet knights in arms against their country? I will not accept of you as prisoners, but have given orders to have you all shot." These same knights, however, had no reason to complain of any harshness used towards them. Before night the French were in possession of the whole country, with the exception of five casals or villages; the Nasciar intrenchment, a work of considerable magnitude, having been abandoned by the battalion appointed to defend it, and the city in the interior surrendered to the French General Vaubois, before he had summoned the governor to open his gates.

10. CAPITULATION OF MALTA TO BUONAPARTE.

IN the mean time the country people had flocked by thousands into the city of Valetta, filled with suspicion and despair. Rumours of treason amongst the knights were believed by the populace, who manifested their indignation by menacing cries; and general insubordination, rapidly extending to the troops, became more and more developed, as unfavourable reports poured in from the distant posts. The abandonment of the Nasciar intrenchment cut off all communication with the country and Valetta, and the inhabitants beheld the French leaguer established under their very walls. A small squadron made a trifling diversion at the mouth of the grand port, and a sally was attempted to the landward, with 900 chosen men, but both enterprises failed. The city was in a state of tumult and despair; the grand-master was surrounded by advisers as perplexed and as incapable as himself, and knights suspected of treason were assassinated in his palace, while others were exposed to the grossest insults.

The besieged passed the night of the tenth of June excited by alarming rumours of insurrection. Their cannon continued to fire upon the advanced posts of the enemy after the sun had set. On the morning of the eleventh, groups of desperate men traversed the city, demanding the lives of those knights whom the French agents had taught them to regard as traitors, and these were, but too often, the very men who alone had the virtue and the capability to defend them. To add to this general confusion, two Greek vessels, which had entered the port as traders, at the time the French fleet first appeared in the offing, were now discovered to be filled with republican soldiers, and arms, which were intended to be put into the hands of the disaffected. Many of the sailors on board these vessels were massacred, while the remainder were made prisoners, and the military stores seized. This detection increased the

fury of the populace, all public confidence was at an end; and, when too late, a body of the better order of citizens repaired to the palace of the grand-master, acknowledged him as their sovereign, implored him to put an end to the anarchy that prevailed, and to instruct them how the city might best be defended. The grand-master referred the deputation to his council, but, before anything was done, the generous re-action on the part of the citizens evaporated.

The sun went down, leaving the city a prey to tumult and despair, and the next day, a vast multitude, including men of all grades, from the noble to the humblest artisan, forcibly entered the grand-master's palace, and, after reproaching him with the treason of his knights, the inefficiency of his orders, and other evils, boldly announced that they had subscribed a paper in the presence of the Dutch consul, delivering the city into the hands of the French, and that they held the authority of the knights as at an end. The most the imbecile Hompesch could do, was to refer the matter to a council, which immediately sent two messengers on board the Orient to solicit from the French commander an armistice of twenty-four hours. The armistice was so framed as to be virtually a surrender at discretion. In the afternoon General Junot and others brought an answer from General Buonaparte, that he would allow the grand-master twenty-four hours to send his delegates to conclude the capitulation, and that he himself would enter the city on the following day. Better than his word, Buonaparte entered the same evening, and immediately made a personal inspection of the fortifications. As he passed through the formidable works which defended the landward side, General Caffarelli, one of his suite, significantly remarked to him, "It is well, general, that there was some one within to open these gates to us. We should have had some trouble in entering, if the place had been quite empty." It is said that the grand-master expected that the victor would at least pay him the compliment of a visit; but the French General avoided the palace, and at the end of several days, Hompesch so far subdued his vanity, as to show him that deference, by which he subjected himself to an interview of cold formality and stately neglect.

By the articles of capitulation which were signed by Buonaparte and the delegates of the grand-master, it was stipulated, that the order of St. John should renounce, in favour of the French republic, the sovereignty of Malta, Gozo, and Cumino, and the French republic pledged itself to use its influence to procure for the grand-master a principality equivalent to these islands, and in the mean time, to allow him a pension of 300,000 francs; amongst other articles, the inhabitants were to continue the free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion, to be secure in their property and privileges, and no extraordinary taxation was to be imposed upon them.

In the afternoon of the 12th of June, 15,000 French troops took possession of the fortifications, and the fleet of the enemy anchored in the ports. There were at this time in the port, two line of battle ships, belonging to the Maltese, besides a frigate, three galleys, two galliots, and some guard-boats; and 1500 pieces of artillery, together with 35,000 stand of small arms, 12,000 barrels of powder, and a large quantity of shot and shell.

Hompesch was not asked to ratify the articles of surrender. Humbled by his losses, which the insolence of the republican army made him feel the more acutely, he hastened to leave the island, and privately embarked in a merchant-ship bound for Trieste, on the night of the 17th June, accompanied by twelve knights. The voyage lasted thirty-nine days, and so heartily sickened were the party of each other's society, that the grand-master resigned his office the moment he landed, and separated himself for ever from the companions of his flight, and died in obscurity at Montpellier in 1804. The order of Malta was virtually extinct from the 12th June, 1798, the day on which the articles of capitulation were signed. From a position of political importance it has fallen to the level of an obscure association, and such, as far as human foresight goes, it is destined to remain.

General Buonaparte left Malta on June the 19th, at the head of the French expedition which was destined for Egypt, leaving behind him 4000 men under General Vaubois to regenerate the island after the pattern of the French republic. The knights who were attached to the French interest had but little reason to applaud the wisdom of their political speculations; exposed to the rage of the Maltese, and unprotected by their new friends, they were

shut up in different fortresses—some fled—some absolutely perished from want, and all suffered the loss of the moral power of political integrity.

The most interesting period of the history of Malta, especially to an Englishman, is yet to follow. The painful depression of the people under the French; their healthy reaction under our own government; their present social, moral, intellectual, and political position; their trade, agriculture, and manufactures.

11. WHAT DID THE FRENCH DO FOR MALTA?

We have recorded all that is known of the ancient history of Malta; we have traced its history in comparatively modern times, during the 268 years of the dominion of the knights of St. John, and have now to detail its sufferings during the two years from 1798 to 1800, when it was held by the republic of France, and to trace its rapid progress towards a higher degree of civilization and happiness, under our own government, from that time till the present day.

When General Buonaparte sailed for Egypt, we have said that he left General Vaubois in the command of the island, supported by 4000 French troops. Everything which bore the stamp of nobility, or recalled to mind the military exploits performed by the knights, was broken and destroyed. The arms of the order, together with those of the principal chiefs, were effaced, not only on the imperial inns, or lodges, of the knights, but also in the palace of the grand-master; every record of patrician ancestry was obliterated. Napoleon himself had carried off in the Orient the choicest treasures he could find in the public treasury, and in the churches of Valetta, as well as those at Citta Notabile, and these were finally lost when that ship was blown up at the battle of Aboukir; other plunder, that had been shipped on board the Sensible, French frigate, was afterwards retaken and restored by the English.

While these robberies were being committed against the people whose religion, and privileges, and property, the conquerors had promised to hold inviolable, a provisional government and municipality were being formed, with the view of introducing the laws of the Directory at Paris. Every article which was stipulated for at the capitulation was broken, and while universal liberty was proclaimed, it was ordered, under a heavy fine, that the sons of the richest families should be sent to France for education on the new principles, and at their own expense. Titles were abolished, and all ranks were declared equal; all establishments were remodelled. Amongst other acts, copyholds, which had been formerly held for three generations, were declared extinct at the expiration of 100 years, and those which had already run this period were declared to be terminated, and many proprietors would have been thus at once plunged into misery, had not the law, through the fear of a general insurrection, been modified a few days after it had been promulgated. At Malta, and many other places out of England, there is an establishment similar to a pawnbroker's, called in Italian, the Monte di Pietà, the intention of which is to afford poor persons an opportunity of obtaining the full value of any article in time of want, and which is not sold without the wish or consent of those who pledge it, and in this case, they alone receive the profit, should there be any, upon the sale. This establishment, which is under the eye of the Government, instead of being, as it was intended, and is at the present day, a friend of the poorer classes, was turned by the French into a cruel and usurious oppression. These and many minor acts of injustice soon taught the Maltese that they had only exchanged an old, and consequently enfeebled despotism, for a new and vigorously harsh one.

Oppression did not slack its pace; soldiers and mariners were drafted into the foreign service of the French, and their wives and children were left without the subsistence which had been guaranteed them; all pensions were provisionally suspended; charitable funds were withheld; and even the bread, which the knights, with all their faults, had distributed daily, to the number of 400 loaves, to the indigent poor, was refused by the French. This despotism only stopped at the limit of the patient endurance of the Maltese. Another attempt was made to plunder the rich church in the Citta Notabile in the interior of the island, and its decorations were ordered to be sold for the public service. The sale was interrupted by the religious feelings of the inhabitants, who had suffered their homes and hearths to be insulted with impunity, yet could not bear the wanton sacrilege of what they deemed holy. The garrison of the city, consisting of sixty men, were massa-

ered along with their commander, and in twenty-four hours every village was in arms, and the whole population of Malta and Gozo burst into one general revolt against the French. The town of Burmola was entered, and the standard of the republic of France, together with eighty barrels of gunpowder, carried off into the country.

The whole of the open country remained in possession of the Maltese, while the French were blockaded in the city of Valetta, and in the towns of Burmola, La Sangle, and Le Bourg, which lie upon the other side of the large harbour. General Vaubois offered a free pardon to all who would lay down their arms, but his messengers of peace were not suffered to return. The character of the Maltese now for the first time in recorded history is seen to develop itself under oppression that would have crushed a weaker nation. The minds of all classes were bent to one purpose; arms were collected; levies were made; and the men were divided into battalions, and distributed to the different posts throughout the island, with as much regularity as if they had been officered by experienced men, and commanded by one master-mind.

12. ARRIVAL OF THE ENGLISH AT MALTA.

ABOUKIR, a small town in Egypt, near Alexandria, was taken by the French after they sailed away from Malta, under General Buonaparte, in 1793. Shortly after it was rendered famous by the naval battle between the French and English fleets, in which the British admiral, Nelson, obtained a complete victory, and for which he received his peerage. Five days after the revolt of the Maltese the news of the battle of Aboukir was brought to General Vaubois by the *Guillaume Tell*, French man-of-war, and two frigates, and incorporating the soldiers and crews of these vessels with his own troops, the French general now found himself at the head of 6000 well-disciplined troops. Nelson, sailing westward, after his victory, fell in with one of his own fleet, which told him that the Maltese had sent out boats in all directions to seek assistance from him, but his own ships were so disabled that he could only despatch a Portuguese squadron, consisting of four ships-of-the-line and two frigates, which arrived off the island on the 18th of September, 1798, with the promise, however, that he himself would soon follow.

General Vaubois having refused to surrender Valetta to the Portuguese admiral, the latter threatened to bombard the city, and, in consequence, many of the inhabitants were permitted to leave it at their own request. The blockade now commenced, the Maltese were supplied with arms and artillery, and on the 25th of October, Lord Nelson himself arrived with fourteen ships of war, and again summoned the place to surrender, liberally offering to transport all the French garrison in safety, as free men, and not as prisoners of war, to their own country. The offer was refused, and the city was invested, and the siege left to the charge of a squadron under Captain Alexander John Ball, as Nelson was compelled to depart, in order to refit his ships, which were unfit for sea.

The king of Sicily had already supplied the Maltese with ammunition, and now he permitted them to draw corn from his granaries upon credit. In the mean time, a few guns only were allowed to play upon Valetta, the bombardment being delayed in the hopes of a speedy capitulation, for it was known that the French garrison were already straitened for provisions. At the commencement of the siege there were 36,000 quarters of corn in their possession, and at the end of twelve months, they calculated that they had yet sufficient to enable them to hold out another year, although, at this period, a pound of fresh pork sold for six shillings; salt meat cost two shillings and sixpence per pound; fish of the coarsest kind two shillings and twopence; a fowl fifty shillings; an egg eightpence; a pound of sugar eighteen shillings and fourpence; a rat one shilling and sevenpence. The flesh of mules and asses was bought up, but of water happily there was no want.

Captain Ball, the commander of the English squadron, is represented as a man of dignified deportment, and of mild and affable manners, and his kindness won so much upon the favour of the Maltese, that in the beginning of 1799 they placed him at the head of all civil, as well as military affairs. A congress was formed, of which Captain Ball was elected the president; the revenue was strengthened by a public loan; customs were regulated, and favourable communications were kept up with Lord Nelson, and with the king of the Two Sicilies. During these energetic and cheering measures, they had to contend, however, with

famine and disease. It is said that during the blockade, which lasted two years, 20,000 persons died without the walls, for want of due relief.

At the end of four months the treasurer of Valetta writes that the countenances of many "bore marks of the cruel privations to which they had been subjected." But month after month passed heavily away, and the cities had been so closely invested, that, during the first twelve months, only fifteen small vessels, and the frigate *Boudeuse*, had been able to throw in fresh supplies. In August, 1799, the citizens were totally beggared, and the public treasury of the French was nearly empty; the soldiers were put upon half pay, and many civilians obtained leave of General Vaubois to fly from the double prospect of a famine and a siege. The population, which had numbered about 40,000 at the commencement of the blockade, had now dwindled down to little more than 7,000, and consequently more corn remained for those that still clung to the hopes of succour being sent to them from France. In December, 1799, the pay of the troops was entirely stopped, together with their allowance of wine and brandy.

The *Guillaume Tell*, the last remnant of that proud fleet that had sailed so exultingly but two years since for Egypt, having now succeeded in escaping out of the harbour of Valetta, was chased and captured by the English after a gallant resistance. This added to the fears of the garrison; scarcely a hope was left that succours could be sent, and famine was in their streets. Two French frigates, which still remained in port, were despatched as a forlorn hope. These gained the open sea, and the hopes of the besieged revived, but two days afterwards, one of these was seen, with the French flag struck, riding in the midst of the English squadron. Fresh pork now sold for seven shillings and two-pence a pound: rats, especially those found in bakehouses, which were of course well fed, sold at an exorbitant price; a bottle of oil was worth a guinea, and the flesh of dogs, cats, horses, asses and mules, had been so generally eaten, that the races of all these animals had become extinct.

Although the land forces of the Maltese had been too inconsiderable to bombard the immense lines of fortification which defend Valetta, yet the city had been so closely invested both by land and water, that famine compelled General Vaubois to surrender to the British. By the capitulation, which was signed on September 5th, 1800, (two years and two days after they had taken Malta from the knights,) it was agreed that the French troops should march out with the honours of war as far as the sea shore, where they should ground their arms, and then be embarked for Marseilles as prisoners of war, until exchanged. On the afternoon of the following day, the 30th, 35th, 48th, and 89th, British regiments, supported by detachments of artillery and engineers, and two battalions of Neapolitan infantry, took possession of the forts Tigné and Ricasoli and Floriana, and two English frigates and some small craft entered the port. The whole English squadron ran into the harbour on the following morning: the English ensign was hoisted at St. Elmo, and two days afterwards, the French troops set sail in English transports.

13. THE PEACE OF AMIENS.

AMIENS is a city of France and capital of the department of the river Somme, which runs out into the English Channel nearly opposite to Brighton. In this city a treaty of peace between Great Britain and the French republic was concluded on the 27th of March, 1802, which stipulated, amongst other things, that the islands of Malta, Gozo, and Cumino, should be restored to the order of St. John, but under thirteen conditions, most of which went to ensure a greater degree of consideration towards the native Maltese, than they had hitherto met with. The Maltese, however, remonstrated in strong terms against the portions of the treaty of Amiens which concerned themselves. They demanded that the island should be restored to them; or that they should be indemnified for the losses occasioned by war and by the plunder of the French: but expressed a full reliance upon the sincerity and in the faith of the British nation, being more desirous of becoming free subjects of the king of England, than of asserting their own independence, of which, indeed, they were incapable.

England also promised by the same treaty, that Malta should be evacuated by the British troops, three months after its ratification; but, not only would the Maltese have thus been sacrificed, either to the knights, or to the French, perhaps to both; but the security of British India would

have been endangered. England, therefore, was compelled to break the treaty. The conditions of the treaty were, in the first place, agreed to with the hope of ensuring peace, and when this hope was frustrated, the same conditions were set aside to save countless thousands from the inevitable miseries of war. The treaty was broken, but the principles of humanity were preserved. Had the stipulations been agreed to, Buonaparte, almost to a moral certainty, would at once have occupied Malta; but, even if he had not done so, the majority of the knights of St. John had always been of the French nation, and consequently under the influence of France, and we have already seen the kind of treatment which the Maltese received at their hands. From that let the reader turn to a succeeding section in this paper, headed, "What have the English done for Malta?" and judge for himself whether the end has not justified the means. The question whether it was wise to make a hollow truce, the conditions of which could not long be kept, is quite another matter.

England, therefore, retained the Maltese islands in her own possession, firstly, because the Maltese themselves, far too weak to stand alone, would otherwise have fallen a prey to masters "from whose tyranny, extortion, and sacrilege," to use their own words, they begged to be delivered; and, secondly, because Malta would have been but a stepping-stone for Buonaparte on his passage to the East. Buonaparte indeed declared that he would almost as soon agree to Britain possessing a suburb of his own capital, as that she should retain this position, for he was dreaming of conquest from the Nile to the Indus, and from the Indus to the Ganges, and could brook no barrier to his insatiable ambition; but England, by her hold upon Malta, had the entire command of the Mediterranean, and became the successful barrier against a desolating Asiatic war.

14. FROBERG'S REGIMENT.

BEFORE the period had arrived for the British troops to evacuate Malta, war was again declared between England and Napoleon Buonaparte. Large military supplies were consequently required, and the resources of our own country failing, contracts were entered into with various foreign speculators, who engaged for a certain remuneration to levy troops according to the emergency, from the peasantry of different countries, to be ready for foreign service. Amongst other persons, a French noble proposed to raise a regiment composed entirely of Greeks. The bargains being struck, says Mr. Badger, the historian of this portion of our subject, the contractor proceeded to gather together from the Levant, a horde of various men, Greeks, Albanians, Slavonians, and what not, who were to be enrolled under the English banners, with the title of "Froberg's Regiment." In a short time they were equipped, transported to Malta, and appointed to occupy Fort Ricasoli, which lies upon the left hand of the traveller as he enters the large harbour of Valetta. The severity exercised over the Frobergs by their commanders was increasingly aggravated, when they found that all the specious promises of professional rank with which they had been lured into the service were vain and delusive. A frequent use of bodily punishment ripened these soldiers for revolt, and the occasion of an officer striking a drummer on the face with a cane, was the signal for open rebellion; during a skirmish, several officers were killed, the gates of the fort were closed against the garrison of Valetta, and the Frobergs declared themselves independent.

In their stronghold these rebels bade defiance to the numerous troops that were at that time stationed in the garrison, and the dubious measures of the military governor Villettes, then second in command, so far assisted them as to leave nothing to be dreaded from a blockade, which was established forthwith. An English artillery officer and several of his men who were still imprisoned within the fort, were compelled to assist in pointing the guns, and firing shot into the city. The scarcity of provisions, and the absence of all subordination, among the rebels, soon produced intestine quarrels, which, as might be expected in such a company, soon terminated in bloodshed. This state of things did not continue long; a large section burst open the gates, threw themselves into the midst of the English troops, leaving behind about one hundred and fifty of their companions, who still kept possession of the fort.

Captain Collins, however, an English naval officer, offered to take upon himself the capture of the fort, and accordingly succeeded in storming it by night, and in securing all the men, with the exception of six, who took possession of the

powder-magazine, and there defied the courage of the assailants, by protesting that they would blow it up in case they persevered in their endeavour to seize them; and, confident of making advantageous terms with the governor, they persisted in their obstinate resistance, and made no advance towards a surrender. From time to time some one presented himself in order to negotiate with the besiegers, but to no avail; nothing but an unconditional surrender would be listened to by the commandant.

Five days passed away in this manner, during which time all their urgent entreaties for provision were obstinately refused, and the unfortunate wretches were reduced to a most pitiable condition. On the sixth these entreaties were pressed with additional importunities, and seconded with the threat, that in case of refusal or the non-assurance of pardon, they would blow up the fort as soon as the vesper-bell tolled from St. John's cathedral. No notice was taken of this desperate menace, nor any thought entertained that these six men valued life so little, as to join together in so horrible a design for their own destruction. All was still until the appointed hour, when the fatal crash was heard, the stones of the magazine were seen rising in the air, and the whole building, with a part of the fortification, was reduced to ruins.

Some time had already elapsed, and the affair of the rebels had ceased to be talked of, when a priest returning home on a donkey from a rather solitary quarter in the direction of the fort, was assailed by a man dressed in the Froberg uniform, who pointed his musket at him over a wall. The affrighted father, however, made good his escape, and upon his arrival at home reported the circumstance to the police. An armed body was forthwith sent in pursuit of the bandit, which succeeded in discovering the retreat of the six poor wretches, who, it was imagined, had been blown up with the magazine. Emaciated and worn out, they were secured with ease. From their own account of their escape, it appears that during the siege they had carried out one of the mines to the precincts of the fortifications, leaving but a slender wall to obstruct their retreat, which they might throw down in an instant during the night, without any noise, when they wished to escape. Until this work was completed, they continued to make every appearance of holding out, but when all was ready, a train of powder was laid at a sufficient distance to secure them from the effects of the explosion, and which they kindled at the precise time of their threat. It seems to have been the hope of the rebels, that in getting free from the fort, they might fall in with some vessel on the coast, and thus make their escape from the island.

15. WHAT HAVE THE ENGLISH DONE FOR MALTA?

THE European war, which lasted until the year 1815, was interrupted during the preceding year by a treaty of peace concluded at Paris, between France and the allied powers, by which the island of Malta and its dependencies were finally secured to the English crown. Destructive to most of the European states, the war had been, from the time of the expulsion of the French, a source of commercial prosperity to the Maltese; their impregnable walls had been the head-quarters of the English army in the Mediterranean; their harbour the rendezvous of the British fleet, and when Napoleon shut up all the continental ports against our manufactures, Malta became the dépôt for a contraband trade, which extended throughout Europe and the Levant, and vitiated the selfish policy that dictated the decrees of Berlin and Milan.

The plague in 1813, and the peace in 1814, which was sealed by the victory at Waterloo in the following year, put an end to all this artificial prosperity, and a long period of depression followed, not, perhaps, without its proper purpose. Certain it is, that since that time the intellectual and moral energies of the people have been more vigorously exerted than at any other previous period of their history. Insignificant in size, and not only without natural outworks like that impregnable rock Gibraltar, Malta, on the contrary, had ever offered shelter to the largest fleets of the enemy. The consequence has been, that from the earliest ages the inhabitants had fallen a prey to conqueror after conqueror, and it may safely be asserted, that until they sought and found protection under the British flag, they had never been in a position to develop the mental and moral faculties which they possessed. That the marked improvement which they now evince is entirely owing to the fostering care of our own government, is not for us to say; there were many causes,

doubtless, working together for this end, the most essential of which were the fitness and capabilities of the Maltese themselves for their present advancing civilization.

The protection which the Maltese enjoyed in time of peril was permanently secured to them, by enrolling themselves as subjects of the crown of England, and during the period of forty years that they have virtually been a British colony no misunderstandings of any unpleasant nature have arisen;—a fact as creditable to themselves as to their parent government.

In the time of the knights no inhabitant could trust himself to sleep on the coast outside a fortified wall, but now every part of the island became equally secure; in the time of the French, the laws of property and religion were violated, but the free exercise of their religion was at once secured to them by the English. Charitable institutions were revived; the naval arsenal and other public establishments were enlarged, and gave employment to a large body of artificers; the fortifications have been put into thorough repair; a board of health has been established; and the streets of Valetta are now swept every morning soon after sunrise, so that no unwholesome garbage is left to infect the air. The lazaretto has become, for extent, and cleanliness, and comfort, the pattern and the best existing model for similar institutions; a vote in parliament, in 1830, afforded the means of erecting a naval hospital upon a healthy and commanding eminence, which Buonaparte is said to have chosen as a site for a palace for himself; the roads leading from Valetta into the interior have latterly received great attention; the magnificent Church of St. John has been partially restored out of the public funds, and other measures of good intention have been carried out.

The consequences of all this have been that outrages upon property, especially upon the property of the English residents, are very unfrequent, while, as we can personally testify, the person is secure at all hours, and in every part of the Maltese islands. The population, too, which in 1803 was 94,000, in the year 1839 numbered 120,989 souls.

While the physical wants of the Maltese were thus enlarged by this increasing population, their moral and intellectual appetites had been also sharpened: constant intercourse with the English had made them more free, more thoughtful, and consequently desirous of doing something for themselves. They had been as it were a little nation in a nursery: for centuries their energies had been cramped: as a people they had been in a perpetual infancy. When, therefore, their social and political wants became recognised, a few years must necessarily have elapsed to let them feel their way: inexperienced in the direction of public business, older hands were required to guide them in all matters of legislation, but now they felt themselves able to assist in managing their little bark. They were still devoted to the English flag: they wanted an English captain to remain at the helm, but, tired of the service of the fore-castle, they begged for some subordinate rank on the quarter-deck. This conscious development of civilisation is the fit reward of those rulers who remove the barriers that arrest the ameliorating progress of mankind.

The Maltese therefore petitioned William the Fourth, in 1832, and the British parliament, in 1836, for the removal of certain alleged restrictions. They wanted a trade less shackled; they desired to be more identified with the local government; and they asked for a free press, "that great mover and interpreter of human thoughts and actions." It is a proof of the sympathy of the home with the local government, that before this petition had arrived in England a vessel was on its way out to Malta, with the order for the immediate establishment of a free press, under the usual wholesome regulations. An office was now opened by the government at Valetta, during certain hours of the week, where any person might state his individual knowledge of any real cause of complaint against the local government, under the guarantee that such statement should be transmitted for consideration in England, and that in case any person holding a public office might feel it his duty to record his own convictions, that his situation should by no means be forfeited by so doing. Finally, Commissioners of Inquiry were sent out to Malta in 1838.

As the healthy result of these liberal and truth-seeking measures, many improvements have already taken place, and many others are in anticipation. The patronage of places has been more fairly allotted to the native Maltese; the ports have been entirely thrown open to all foreign merchandise, the duties remaining only on articles of consumption. Education has been more generally attended to, pri-

mary schools having been established throughout the rural districts. The University and Lyceum have been remodelled, and numerous periodicals, devoted to political and literary subjects, have sprung up since the opening of the press.

Compared with what the French did for Malta, there is much subject for praise in the conduct of the British government, under similar circumstances; and therefore it is, we repeat, that by breaking the treaty of Amiens, the principles of humanity were preserved. But, compared with what man ought to do for his fellow-man, as well as for self-respect, very much remains to be done in order to encourage the industry of our attached fellow-subjects—the Maltese.

16. DESCRIPTION OF MALTA, GOZO, AND CUMINO.

MALTA was formerly considered to belong to Africa, but by an act passed by the British parliament it was declared part of Europe. It indeed belongs to both, for the general aspect of the country; the temperature, language, and habits of the natives; the climate in all the glowing intensity of a tropical sun without its sickliness—are African; while its religion, its political security, its intellectual and social resources, as well as its every-day and household comforts, are altogether European, and even English.

We have already given a general account of Malta. We have now to add that this and the adjoining islands lie between 35° 49' and 36° north latitude, and 14° 10' and 14° 36' east longitude from Greenwich. The surface of Malta and Gozo, is said to comprise about 114 square miles, or 72,960 acres. Malta contains two cities, and twenty-two casals, or villages. A ridge of land divides this island into two unequal parts; the eastern and larger division contains the old and new capitals, as well as the twenty-two casals, while the western section is destitute both of towns and villages, and almost of inhabitants. This unequal distribution of the population was originally caused by the insecurity of the western coast; the natives consequently retired beyond the ridge of land which formed a natural fortification; the churches were built where their altars were least likely to be violated, and now the convenience of attending these, together with the force of habit, have concentrated the population towards the eastern shores of the island.

The grand harbour is about one mile and three quarters in length. Near to the entrance, which is only 450 yards broad, the water is from sixty to eighty fathoms in depth. Ships are enabled by the boldness of the shores, and compelled by the narrowness of the entrance of the harbour, to pass close to fortifications sufficient to annihilate the most powerful force that could be brought against them; but in times of peace it is a safe and commodious port. Water for shipping may be had in any quantity, and the basin is large enough to contain the whole British Navy. Five and twenty sail of the line, besides three or four hundred merchant-men, were known to lie in this port during the last war.

On the right hand, upon entering the port, is a low quay on which are a series of wharfs, ranges of store-houses, the custom-house, fish-market, &c. The merchant and trading vessels lie close into shore, while above these and the adjoining warehouses rise the bastions and domestic palaces of Valetta, interspersed with the towers of numerous churches. All these edifices are built of cream-coloured stone, appearing as fresh as if they were but just erected, and the whole brilliant in a cloudless atmosphere, unsullied by a particle of smoke, and reflected in the clear blue waters of the port beneath.

The coast upon the left is deeply indented by three inlets; the first, immediately on passing the entrance of the harbour, is called Bigghi Bay, where stands the naval hospital; the second, a narrow creek, called the Galley-Port in the time of the knights, is now principally appropriated to the establishments connected with the naval arsenal, store-houses, and residences of the officers belonging to these different departments; lastly, Porto della Sanglea, which is chiefly occupied by private yards for building and repairing merchant-vessels. These last two creeks are perfectly land-locked. A reference to the bird's eye view of the city and port of Malta, which we gave in a previous Supplement, will make this description perfectly intelligible. The smaller inlets are protected from every wind, but the central basin of the grand harbour is open to the north-east, or gregali, which sometimes renders it dangerous for the smaller boats to ply from Valetta to the old towns, but acci-

dents rarely happen to the larger vessels, as the bottom affords them good anchorage.

Military men consider the capital of Malta as impregnable to every enemy from without, and that famine within is the only reason that can justify the surrender of the place. We have said that when Napoleon entered Valetta, it was remarked to him, that if the city had been quite empty, and there had been no one within to open the gates for them, an entrance would have been effected with some difficulty; and when General Vaubois, the officer whom Napoleon left in command when he sailed for Egypt, asked for directions relative to the defence of the garrison, Buonaparte told him to lock the gates and put the keys in his pocket. The fortifications are indeed most stupendous, says Brydone; all the boasted catacombs of Rome and Naples are a trifle to the immense excavations that have been made in this little island.

Towers are built along the coast, which are now only used to prevent smuggling, and to preserve quarantine. The old capital is walled and fortified, and the lines of Nasciar to the westward were sufficient, in the earlier periods of the knights, to arrest the progress of an enemy towards the more populous districts of the island; but it is to the fortifications that surround the two harbours that any garrison must now look for security.

To the landward of Valetta five successive lines of works stretch from one port to the other, and dry ditches are excavated in the rock, to a depth varying from 90 to 140 feet. Between the first and second lines of fortification stands the town of Florian, which contains a church, a considerable number of houses, a public garden, parade, and barracks. Fort Tigné, a small but strong fort, commands the entrance of the quarantine harbour, while the castle of St. Angelo makes the entrance of the grand harbour with four tiers of guns on one side, and fort Ricasoli on the other.

More than 800 pieces of ordnance were mounted on the walls when the French capitulated to the English in A.D. 1800. At present there are 947 embrasures in the walls of Valetta and the three old cities, to fill which, together with cavaliers* and parapets, 1150 guns would be required. Mortars, the mouths of some of which are six feet wide, are cut out of the rocks near the different creeks where a debarcation might be expected.

In the previous history of Malta, we were careful to note the successive additions that each grand-master of the knights made to the public works. The Cottonera, Florian, and other works were there mentioned. For the last few years, English engineers have been engaged in repairing and perfecting these defences, at a very considerable expense. An old officer of the island assured us that very few, even of the residents, were aware of the extent of the mines and countermines that threaded the city, three deep, in various directions, which our government had excavated in the soft porous rock so well fitted for these works. The same officer told us that for every post to be filled, 30,000 soldiers would be required to man the present walls.

We have said that famine alone can reduce Valetta. To anticipate even this contingency, large subterranean granaries, hewn out of the solid rock, are stored with corn; enough, it is said, for three years' consumption.

The little island of Gozo, close to Malta, is defended by fort Chambray on its S.E. coast. The strait between the two islands is commanded by fort Rosso, which stands on the islet of Cumino. Of Cumino we have nothing to add, but that it partakes more of the character of Gozo than of Malta, being more fruitful, less rocky, and was rented, when we visited it, by an Englishman, as a dairy-farm, for 50*l.* per annum. Gozo contains six casals, and a populous town in the interior, called Rabbato, which lies at the foot of an old ruinous castle, and was supposed to have been founded by the Tyrians. The castle stands on a solitary rock not more than three hundred yards in diameter.

Gozo contains no chapel for the English residents, who rarely, however, number more than twenty, and frequently less; but the president sometimes reads the service of our church at his own house. There is an hospital at Rabbato which was founded by our government, and it is a pleasure to see how well everything is conducted here under the watchful eye of a faithful officer. When we inspected it, the number of patients was seventy-five; the cost of each per day for food, medicine, clothing, &c., was tenpence half-

* Cavalier. A term in fortification used to denote a work generally raised within the walls, and from ten to twelve feet higher than the rest of the line. Their principal use is to command all the adjacent works and the country round.

penny; the annual expense of drugs had been successively reduced from 140*l.*—to 100*l.*—to 22*l.*—16*l.*—11*l.*, during which time the number of sick people admitted had been more than doubled. The funds, in fact, had previously been all spent, and only between twenty and thirty patients admitted at a time; now there were generally from sixty to eighty in-patients, and surplus funds remained over and above the expenditure.

We give this instance in detail, because we are thoroughly persuaded that the English have brought much common sense and honesty of purpose to bear upon the affairs of these islands.

17. THE CITIES OF MALTA.

VALETTA is built on a tongue of land a mile and a half in length, and was first made the seat of government in 1571. It is the citadel of the island and the residence of the principal merchants and private families. The three cities on the opposite side of the grand harbour, Vittariosa, Isola, and Burmola, are inhabited by an industrious class of mariners, petty traders, and those attached to the naval arsenal and other government works. These are included with Valetta, as the one capital of the island, and altogether contain about fifty thousand souls. Sliema and St. Julian's are two pleasant villages to the west of Valetta, where many of the inhabitants have built their country houses.

Valetta has three gates; the streets are built at right angles, are generally well paved and drained, and purposely narrow to economize the shade, as the glare caused by the reflection of the sun from the white sandstone is distressing to the eyes. It is indeed considered so injurious that the Maltese say that none but dogs and Englishmen go out at mid-day. Passing overland through Valetta, from one harbour to the other, the ascent is considerable, and the streets are, in consequence, constructed with steps cut in the solid rock. The domestic architecture of this city is superior to that of any town on the continent of Europe. It is safe to say that the domestic palaces of Valetta are not only relatively, but absolutely, cheaper than a dirty third-rate London lodging.

Of the public buildings the churches form the most considerable number, but of these that of St. John's is alone visited by the passing stranger. This was erected in 1580 by the grand-master John de Cassiere, and dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The exterior presents but little to admire, but, within, it is rich in marble, and carving and gilding and mosaic work. The roof is supported by noble marble pillars, and the ceiling represents various scenes from the life of St. John, painted by Chevalier Matthias. The interior is 240 feet long, and 60 wide. The rich and beautiful mosaic pavement is unrivalled; it is composed of rare marbles and valuable stones, arranged with great skill in various devices, each tablet forming an exquisite picture, finely polished, representing the arms of some knight of Malta.

When the French plundered the public establishments, they are said to have taken from this church alone, seven cart-loads of precious metal. A fine pair of silver gates leading to the altar escaped their rapacity by being painted. In the vestry is a painting on panel, which served as an altar-piece in the Admiral's galley in the time of the knights when they put to sea. In the centre of this picture is a representation of the descent from the cross. There are twenty-four choral books, of the largest size in folio, written on vellum and illuminated; the notes are about as big as diamonds on playing cards. These books, as well as the above-mentioned picture, were brought by the order from Rhodes in 1530. The tapestry and other objects are highly interesting, especially the monuments of the knights and grand-masters of the order; but it is impossible to mention these in detail.

The palace of the grand-masters is now used as a residence for the English governor. It is an immense quadrangular building with a court-yard in the centre; it forms one side of the Piazza San Georgio, the principal square in Valetta; externally, the palace is plain and unornamented, but imposing from its vast size. The apartments are large, numerous, and convenient, and the furniture splendid. St. George's Hall is scarcely equalled by any room in Europe. Besides numerous paintings by old, and chiefly Maltese artists, the palace contains an extremely interesting and well-arranged armoury. The Piazza San Georgio is used as a military parade, and enlivened in the evenings by one of the regimental bands.

The knights of Malta inhabited separate palaces according to the nation from which they came. These palaces were called the Inns or Hotels of the different languages or nations, and are still in existence, with the exception of the English, which was abandoned at the Protestant Reformation. They are used for officers' quarters, for private residences, in one or two instances, and one, having the only large room in the island that is floored with planks, is set apart for public assemblies, fancy balls, &c. The theatre is a handsome building, in which tolerable operas are given. The public hotels are excellent and very cheap.

The light-house on Fort St. Elmo occupies a very commanding situation. Beneath the watch-tower are deposited the remains of Sir Ralph Abercrombie. In another part of the fort is the tomb of Governor Sir Alexander Ball, and in the circuit of the ramparts are seen the names of Sir Thomas Maitland, the Marquess of Hastings, Admiral Hotham, Sir R. Spencer, &c. The English burial-ground is a pretty spot, planted like an English flower-garden; but those belonging to the natives are mere depositories of the dead, and, very properly, further removed from the city.

Città Vecchia, or the old city, called Medina by the Saracens, and Città Notabile by Alphonso, king of Sicily, in 1428, is said to have been founded by the Tyrians before they built Carthage. Its houses were anciently magnificent, as recorded by Diodorus Siculus, and its extent considerable. It is situated in a rising ground in the interior of the island, six miles from Valetta; and, riding towards it along that road with a friend who had just visited Jerusalem, the writer was told that it bears a very marked resemblance to the Holy City.

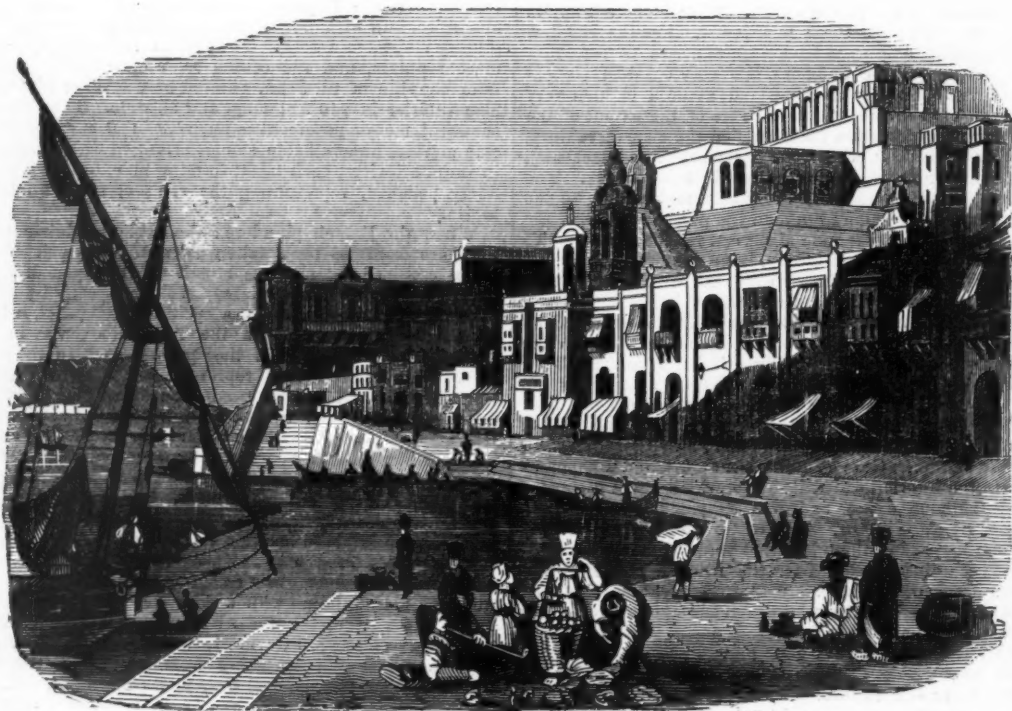
It is the see of a bishop, and contains a cathedral, several churches, and religious houses. In the choir of the cathedral is an exquisite specimen of Tarsia, or inlaid wood. The domestic buildings are still magnificent, as in the days of old; but the inhabitants are impoverished. They live, indeed, in richly-wrought palaces of stone, but without money and without resources, except what they draw from the soil they stand on. If the thousands of English families who hurry, year after year, from one miserable French provincial hotel to another, could but see the vast stone mansions of Malta rising under a cloudless sky, surrounded by every fruit and flower that could add to their creature

comforts, and by a native population attached to the persons and respectful of the property, of the English, and speaking too our own language we think that they could not hesitate to purchase for as many shillings the health, the relaxation of mind and body, for which they in vain seek elsewhere with as many pounds sterling.

The parish churches of the casals or villages are large and magnificent, richly worked without, and decorated within. It has been observed, that the cathedrals of many towns in Italy are not more splendid than many of these village churches. Their style of architecture is heavy; but their great mass and rich detail do in part compensate for an absence of certain ideas of proportion which we consider essential to a fine building.

The houses of the natives seldom exceed a second story. The lower parts are generally, in the towns, let as shops, or to the poorer classes: a low intermediate, or *mezzanino*, floor contains the sleeping rooms and offices, the principal apartments being on the upper story, which usually has large glazed balconies projecting in the Spanish fashion, supported on finely carved stone work. The roofs are flat, and covered with a red cement, called *pozzolana*, and form agreeable and much-frequented terraces. They also serve to collect the rain, which is conveyed from thence by pipes to subterranean cisterns, and nothing can exceed the sweetness and freshness of this water at the hottest season of the year. It was to anticipate the possible failure of this supply that Alof de Vignacourt built his magnificent aqueduct. In Valetta, below a certain level, the water becomes brackish, and this increases the value of the public fountains that Vignacourt fed by his aqueduct.

Internally the houses possess much comfort and convenience; the stairs and floors, being mostly of stone, are cool and pleasant in the very hot weather. The rents are remarkably low. When we say that a private palace may be obtained for forty pounds a year, we are convinced that we exceed the price frequently given for the most luxurious habitations in which man need desire to dwell on earth. Let English families with small incomes, who will not live at home, come here rather than to the very inferior and more expensive establishments in the provincial towns of France or Belgium, or Germany.



THE MARINA OF VALETTA.